

# The Jungle, Reformers ... and Sex

THE FLOW OF BOOKS on crime and punishment continues unabated. You can take your pick of crime from any angle. Books for the connoisseur are reviewed elsewhere in this journal. Here we hope to look regularly at new books for the interested layman; important books but, above all *readable* ones.

Forty years as a Clerk in a Magistrates Court has produced *Open Court* (Cassell, 21s. 0d.) a book of memories by F. T. GILES. A mixed grill of "rampageous beaks," humorous gaolers and an endless procession of accused combine to bring the court to life. Not all that serious, but then forty years is a long stretch.

JOHN VIDLER served almost as long, and leaves his account in *If Freedom Fail* (Macmillan, 21s. 0d.). How refreshing to find a Prison Governor who can leave a lively record, but then what else could one expect from the man who is best remembered as walking round Maidstone Prison in his braces? A truly virtuoso performer.

Another virtuoso of a slightly earlier generation was *Homer Lane*. His fascinating Biography has been written by DAVID WILLS (Allen and Unwin, 40s. 0d.). Here is Group Therapy, Shared Responsibility and a too-too permissive regime, and all before the first World War. (Hasn't anyone got an *original* idea?) And, like all men born before their time, he faced scandal and discredit. Reformer or charlatan? David Wills leaves you to draw your own conclusion.

The "Foster Home" pioneered by Borstal After Care is as near an original idea as any. The first two and a half years of this small family-type home for ex-Borstal boys is reviewed by DR. DEREK MILLER in *Growth to Freedom* (Tavistock, 30s. 0d.). Essential reading for borstal staff; indeed for staff of all penal institutions. This sort of follow-up study exposes us starkly to our short-comings. Unless it is too painful for us to face up to, here is portrayed the jungle into which our discharges are thrown, and their ability to face its stresses and strains.

The jungle is explored in a new way in *Undertow* by HELEN PARKHURST (Bell, 21s.0d.). The story of a boy called Tony, American and a dope peddler, but by no means irrelevant: "I just wished I'd had somebody when I was in there who was understandable, so that when I was ready to leave, my mind wasn't all mixed up." Tony almost illiterate, "talk-writes" his story on to tape which proves a compelling medium.

Why does a man become a penal reformer? For adventure or experience? Through guilt and the good of sacrifice? Or the accident of personal involvement at a deep level? For MERVYN TURNER it was the latter. The scars of his imprisonment show indelibly in *A Pretty Sort of Prison* (Pall Mall Press, 25s.0d.). The antagonism from staff he has felt as a Prison Visitor continues to sour his impression of prison. This is a useful book for people coming new to prisons, but it is disappointingly lacking in depth. Yet here is real warmth and concern for prisoners, miserable social failures who preserve their anonymity.

LORD LONGFORD'S motivation is entirely different. From Eton and Oxford, he comes into the prison scene as one of his *Five Lives* (Hutchinson, 30s.0d.) and finds prisoners are surprisingly normal people. He breakfasts with men released after serving sentences for murder and homosexual offences—a curiously inverted form of name dropping. He is determined to fan the wind of change into a gale, and it will be interesting to see how far he can achieve this as he begins his sixth life as Lord Privy Seal.

And, incidentally, who has stolen any *Sexual Deviation* by ANTHONY STORE (Pelican Books, 3s. 6d.)? I had only read the first three chapters, but even so recommend this as the Best Buy. Sex is a worrying thing. It is difficult to deal with. And it is difficult to work with sex offenders whose impulses and actions seem at times incomprehensible. Mr. Storr examines sexuality as a basic part of the personality, and warns that "there is not a single one of us who can be sure that, in his later years, he will not become the subject of a paragraph in the News of the World . . ." Yes, sex is perplexing. I must get another copy of that book.

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